

1999

Spectrum, 1999

Northwestern College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/spectrum>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Northwestern College Publications at NWCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spectrum by an authorized administrator of NWCommons. For more information, please contact ggrond@nwciowa.edu.

Spectrum



1999

contents

<i>Peaceful Chaos</i>	2
<i>wooden spoons</i>	3
<i>Midas</i>	4
<i>To the American with the camera</i>	4
<i>Little Henry and the Royal Guard</i>	4
<i>Images Ringing of Fall</i>	5
<i>Block</i>	5
<i>The Rower</i>	5
<i>A Sister on Loan</i>	6
<i>Marie's Refrigerator</i>	6
<i>Turn Down the Radio!</i>	7
<i>Old and Waiting</i>	8
<i>Grasping Humility</i>	8
<i>Newkirk, Iowa</i>	9
<i>Sioux Summer</i>	9
<i>Homesick</i>	9
<i>Outside My Window</i>	10
<i>The Joy of Fall</i>	11
<i>The Remaining Leaf on an Oak Tree</i>	11
<i>The Risen Son</i>	11
<i>Eventide Production</i>	11
<i>The Lunchbox</i>	12
<i>Fishing</i>	12
<i>Wite-Out</i>	12
<i>Star Thrower in a Pond</i>	13
<i>In Vain</i>	15
<i>Artichoke Hearts</i>	15
<i>Crush</i>	16
<i>Grandmother</i>	17
<i>Grandpa's Funeral</i>	17
<i>Rapunzel</i>	17
<i>Mica Rock</i>	18
<i>heavenly bodies</i>	18
<i>Haunted</i>	18
<i>Grandma V</i>	19
<i>The Creek</i>	20
<i>Key Change</i>	21
<i>Syncopation</i>	21
<i>Waterfalling</i>	21
<i>Mother's Hands</i>	22
<i>Dad's Pockets</i>	22
<i>Daddy's Arms</i>	22
<i>Ulysses</i>	23
<i>Christianity Absurd</i>	24
<i>Stella, What Do You Want?</i>	25
<i>Christ is Reality</i>	25
<i>Untitled</i>	25
<i>These Things</i>	26
<i>The Success of General Custer</i>	26
<i>The Dentist</i>	27
<i>Yet Another Tupperware Bowl</i>	27
<i>Deli Poems</i>	27
<i>A Flight</i>	28
<i>Ant</i>	29
<i>Doing Layout on the First Day's Outfit</i>	29
<i>The Heart Exchange</i>	30
<i>Returning to a River</i>	30
<i>Amelia</i>	31
<i>Sitting on a Football Field</i>	31
<i>The Summer Job</i>	32

judges' comments

This year's judges were Northwestern Alumni Carrie Dean and Lori Ronken. Dean was an English major, Ronken a student-initiated major in writing and communications.

About the award-winning pieces, the judges said, "The pieces we chose, whether poetry or prose, had two things in common: a strong, authentic voice and at least one vivid, compelling image that lingered long after our reading."

First Place Prose went to "Peaceful Chaos" by Gary Hanson. Dean and Ronken said that "this is a well-told story, accesible even to non-football fans...we were drawn to the strong voice revealing the paradox of being simultaneously the most popular and the one most on the outside." "The Summer Job" by Colette Johnson received an Honorable Mention for prose. The judges appreciated "the thoroughly snappy attitude" of the piece and felt that it had "a clear sense of direction from the very beginning, and we felt safe in following the author all the way to her conclusion."

Dean and Ronken enjoyed this years' poetry submissions. "Nearly every poem had a good nugget in it--something for us to take from it and think about later over lunch." The poetry pieces the judges selected for this year's winners were the ones that "suprised us with their thoughtful perceptions and unique perspectives."

First Place Poetry was received by Lynae Vandermeulen for her poem "In Vain." Dean and Ronken applauded the maturity of the piece

which encouraged "multiple readings which we were happy to do." About its artistry, the judges said that "we were hooked from the intriguing first line...and that surprising, original observation is so carefully detailed for us that by the end we say 'of course, that is exactly right.' All trees look a bit different to us now."

Second Place Poetry went to Colette Johnson's "Deli Poems." The judges stated that "these small poems sat well with us, and made us smile. The well-chosen images of three-bean salad and the four-piece chicken conveyed a confidence that made the assertion that a deli clerk knows all about you completely believable."

Honorable Mentions for poetry were received by Sara Lamb and Tom Truesdell.

Of "Grandpa's Funeral" by Lamb, Dean and Ronken stated that "Like "Deli Poems" the well-chosen details, like the name of the funeral home and the six spoonfuls of sugar, convinced us of an authentic voice behind this poem."

In Lamb's "Yet Another Tupperware Bowl" the judges admired the "clever Tupperware metaphor" and Lamb's ability to "sustain that metaphor throughout the entire piece." Truesdell's "Mica Rock" received an Honorable Mention due to "the multilayered symbolism of the mica rock." Dean and Ronken also commented that "this poem has the best cohesion of any poem in the *Spectrum*; the images form a consistent, coherent whole."

Editor's Note

As the *Spectrum* Staff started the process of putting together this year's edition, we wanted to work toward a professional publication that displays the excellence and variety of Northwestern College's writers. Now, as our process has ended, we feel we were successful in that goal. Our process was not easy, yet the reward of real-

izing the outcome is great. We appreciate all of those who are willing to place thier work and thoughts and ideas in our path for the enhancement and enjoyment of all who pick up the *Spectrum*. Thank you to all who helped us along our process. May this collection of works by talented authors enhance your reading experience.

Naomi Metz

Spectrum Editor

spectrum staff

editor: Naomi Metz

assistant editors: Stephanie Timmerman, Cynthia Hustrulid

art editor & illustrator: Martha Hansen

cover design: Martha Hansen

other readers: Sara Lamb, Laura Whitwer, Carl Velzke,

adviser: Dr. Carl Vandermeulen

Peaceful Chaos

Mitch didn't know why he was better than everyone else out there, he just was. Ah yes, out there. Out where the crisp popcorn laced air engulfed his lungs and brought every hair on the back of his neck to attention. Where flannel clad friends picked up their scripted lines right where they left them last fall without even realizing it. Lines too cherished for July's heat, too exuberant for February's doldrums, but perfectly fitted for poised September nights. The conversations were protected under the lights which stood like pillars, guarding the sacred stories until the first cold front blows through resurrecting the therapeutic slang. Those pillars of sight poured down pure adrenaline, defied nature, and created shadows against the powers of darkness. Mitch could not imagine a more beautiful sight.

The crisp popcorn air and flannel clad friends had in some strange way become a part of Mitch. He could smell the cool air each time he closed his eyes. But open them he must, and once again confront the masses. He only recognized a hand full of the nameless throng, yet they all knew his name, and knew it well. Many claimed to be his friend though he knew them not from Adam. Part of Mitch loved the attention; deep down he craved it. Yet often he would pause and wonder, "Do these people really know me?" "Do they know anything about Mitchell Douglas Wilson? Do they even care? Would they even recognize me without my padded armor and golden sheath?"

After laboring six days, Mitch longed to cross the white lines guarded by the pillars and enjoy his prescribed time of rest. Mitch didn't know why his soul yearned for such a place. Does an artist know why she paints? Does a musician really know what her fingers are playing? The preacher claims to be inspired, he claims to be a channel. Mitch could relate. He didn't know why he was better than everyone else, he just was. Was it his fault others were so slow? Was it his fault he could see things they could not? Was it his fault he could throw a spiral at age three? Mitch didn't think so. Often his mind would whisper, "It's not like I had any say in how God made me."

In fact, some of the time Mitch saw his talent as more of a burden than a blessing. On days when it seemed like everybody

wanted something from him. Days when people thought he was stuck up for not talking. He soon grew weary of others holding him to a higher standard, just waiting for him to mess up. Mitch got confused outside the white lines.

He would open his locker cautiously on game days. He had come to expect the various gifts: dental floss bras, silk panties, and a box or two of Trojans. Mitch didn't know where they came from, and frankly he didn't care. The first few times it happened he was flattered, almost embarrassed, but now he would simply drop the goods in the trash on his way to first period.

Today is game day and Mitch knows the routine. He opens his locker quickly, removes the suspected gifts and heads towards Mr. Labecki's first period accounting class, making a stop at the trash can along the way. Everyone he sees wants to talk. His head pounds as the prerecorded conversation spews from his mouth without his permission. By fourth period Mitch has had enough. Rising in the middle of Mr. Stein's "Post-Modern Poetry" lecture, Mitch makes the cardigan-clad teacher aware of his plan to go home and get some rest. His attempt to leave is thwarted by Stein's, "That's a very good idea Mitch. You'll need your rest for tonight. Good luck son." Mitch doesn't know why he is treated different than everyone else, he just is.

One glance, that's all it took, one simple momentary shift of the retina and the truth is made known. Eyes don't lie. They are one of the few things a man can truly rely on. As Mitch enters the hard, mildew locker room, he can feel all eyes upon him. The room is filled with anxious eyes, nervous eyes, blood shot eyes, weak eyes, frightened eyes. Mitch studies them all. After each has been accounted for, he slowly adjusts his headphones, turns up the volume, and tries to keep his eyes open.

"They think they can come in here, into our house and take our pride! They think they can come in here and rape our land! They think you guys are a bunch of weak pansies who don't deserve to hold their jock straps! They think you guys are a bunch of lazy good for nothin' women who play without passion! They think they've out-worked you. They think they've out run you. They

think they've out-lifted you. They think they want it more than you do tonight. Those low down dirty sons-a-bitches think they're better than you!! They think you're pathetic!!

"But ya know what guys? Ya know what? I know a little something they don't. Yeah I do. I know about a little secret they overlooked. Ya see men; I know your heart. I know about the endless hours you spent in the weight room. I know about the miles you ran in one hundred-degree heat. I know how hard you have worked for this moment, this defining moment when it all is on the line. Men, I know about your heart. And because I know your heart, I already know who's going to win. I already know! I know if we go out there and execute and play the way we know how, we will win. We will win! WE WILL WIN, MEN!! Stay focused. Know your role. Keep your head in the game, and Mitch will lead us home. Now take a knee."

Yeah right, Mitch will lead us home, thanks a lot coach. Nothing like a little more pressure. Why can't you just shut up and let me play? Why can't everybody just shut up and let me play? Just leave me alone!

The words are distant from Mitch's mind, detached like the recurring conversation. The Holy words are mumbled with little thought, even less feeling, and no comprehension. Kneeling there Mitch figures some coach way back must have tried it, got lucky and won a few games. So now the most holy prayer ever recited has been reduced to a rabbit's foot. Ya gotta love this game huh? The best is yet to come, oh yeah just wait a second, almost there, here it comes..., "Amen"--followed in the very same breath by, "NOW GET OUT THERE AND RIP THEIR FREAKING HEADS OFF!!!" Classic, simply classic Coach.

But soon and very soon, relief will come. Soon and very soon the golden sheath will be lowered into place and the voices will be silenced. Soon and very soon Mitch won't have to think any more, just react, letting the art flow, not knowing why it flows so smooth for him and so rough for others, and not caring. The sheath is lowered. His ears fall off as his mind goes numb. The faint smell of popcorn wafts in the distance. As he crosses the white line, feeling the light pour down, Mitch yawns. He yawns deep.

"Slot 11 gusto, 1-38 dog opposite; slot

11 gusto, 1-38 dog opposite, on two on two, ready...break." Clap, turn, face the enemy, strut to the line, not too fast, not too slow. "SET." Six men bow in perfect unison. A slow deliberate survey of the defense, find the free safety. Read the eyes. Read the eyes. Lick right hand twice, just the tips. "RED 98." Tap left foot twice, directing another loyal soldier to his new coordinates. "RED 98." "HIT!" "HIT!" Leather meets skin. Explosion. Look off the safety, look off the safety. Get back quick, quick. The receiver has a step, maybe two. Stop. Plant. And at the last possible instant look directly at Gusto.

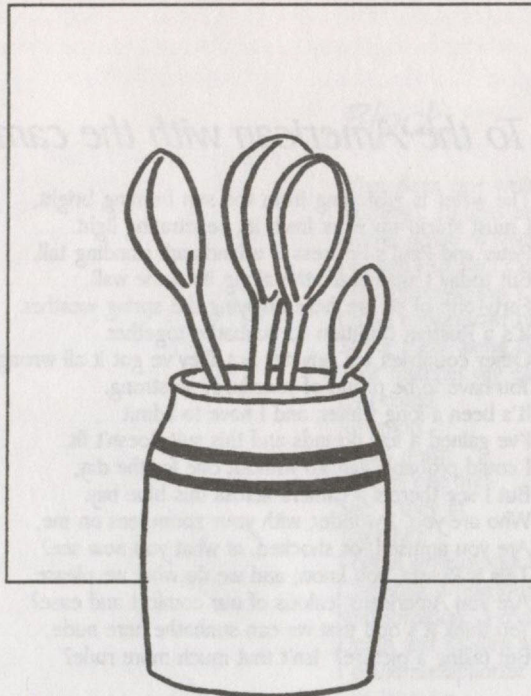
A moment later the art flows. Mitch reaches back, his arm running on instinct, his eyes locked on a spot down field, a spot no one else seems to notice. The rocket is launched. The perfectly thrown spiral, tight and precise, seems to defy gravity as it sails

into the blackened sky. Hanging there longer than it should be able to. Soaring above the pillars, piercing the popcorn air, rising when it should be falling, the ball flies on. The flannel shirts are transfixed; not a word is spoken. It's like God Himself is holding His breath. Mitch, watching for a moment, feels himself being leveled by a blitzing linebacker. The tight spiral race begins to descend ever so gently mere inches beyond the free safeties finger tips, coming to rest in Gusto's arms as his legs race below him, never losing stride. Picking himself up off the ground, Mitch pumps his fists towards Heaven embracing the moment as the flannel shirts erupt.

His team won. They won big. Mitch's performance was breath taking. He defied the laws of nature combining the grace of a ballerina, the speed of a track star, and the

bravado of a gunslinger. His confidence was contagious, his leadership unquestioned. He had led his team to victory. Afterwards, he talks with three reporters. He signs a dozen autographs. He spits, and girls giggle. The flannel shirts love him. The coach loves him. The scouts love him. They all told him he was the best, far better than everyone else out there. Mitch smiles. He shivers as the lights are turned off. Slowly he glances back to the darkness. The reporters pack up their gear. Leaving the field Mitch is cold. Cold and alone.

1st Place Prose, Gary Hanson



wooden spoons

she is baking
a cake. it's a
special day.
she pulls out the
little footstool—
(one leg on
black,
one leg on
white)
an invitation
for tiny hands
to help her stir.
she uses a wooden spoon.
remember the
taste of that spoon?
that tangy,
bitter wood
rasping against
your tongue
as you lick from it,
carefully,
so you don't get
splinters,
the last of the sweet
frosting?

Abby Stevens

Midas

The spiders built webs
faster than we lived that summer,
which was too fast for summer, we all agreed
that once,
and checked our watches, and worked an hour more.

The webs built overnight vaulted the narrow rooms
until the corners looked wilder than the Maine woods
outside.
We never saw them working, nailing, stitching like we
did.
They just inhabited, living on flies we never noticed for
the spiders.

We'd tear webs down
with broomhandles,
swirling – like spaghetti on a fork –
those viral strands. Spiders belonged,
we said, in the Maine woods, not inside our small camp
theatre,
already too crowded with each other. Erin,
a Mormon and more guilty than the rest,
dusted one web with spray paint –
True Gold, 093 –
and caught it on construction paper.

It was that beautiful.

Soon we painted all our webs,
and half the wall, and spiders too,
and justified destruction by the beauty of our bulletin
board,
a stained-glass crash of colored paper, fractured
like a windshield.

But as the days grew darker but no shorter,
and rainstorms made the rooms close, but not us,
the broomstick slashed again.

August made us hate the spiders watching us from the
corners; patient,
and gilded like a dream.

Lynae Vandermeulen

Little Henry and the Royal Guard

Little Henry's hands
are mounted on his hips.
He's sporting starched plaid shorts
that top his black wing tips.

Little Henry's mother
shuffles down the walk
to retrieve the child
whom she feared she'd lost.

Little Henry stares
at how the British guard
stoically cradles his rifle
and focuses afar.

A proper English chap
would not ogle so.
At least, that's what Mum says
when she takes his hand to go.

Amanda Baker

To the American with the camera

The water is glistening from the sun burning bright,
I must shield my eyes from its penetrating light.
Peter and Paul's Fortress is a landmark standing tall,
But today I shall sunbathe along its stone wall.
Forty-one of us are here enjoying the spring weather.
It's a Russian tradition to sunbathe together.
Other countries are private, but they've got it all wrong.
You have to be proud of your body so strong.
It's been a long winter, and I have to admit
I've gained a few pounds and this suit doesn't fit.
I could probably just go without one for the day,
But I see there's a camera across this blue bay.
Who are you, I wonder, with your zoom lens on me,
Are you amused, or shocked, at what you now see?
This is Russia, you know, and we do what we please.
Are you Americans jealous of our comfort and ease?
You think it's odd that we can sunbathe here nude,
But taking a picture? Isn't that much more rude?

Emily Gosselink

Images Ringing of Fall

A plethora of images
designate Autumn and Winter.
From colored leaves to pumpkins
and farmers making continuous hauls
have dented, red wagons
barreling seas of gold.
The labor and callused hands
of fathers, adorned in sweat-drenched overalls.
Daughters gliding softly
to the dances brought by Fall.
Mothers planning Spring's paintings
of yellow tulips, using flower bulbs.

Darkness comes early in the afternoon
with the yearly retreat of the sun.
Families eat supper at dusk,
enjoying Fall-flavored corn
tasting of outdoors, sweat, and coolness
in early evening's sunset.
After bringing the harvest in,
a dry, twinkling red leaf
is flittered gently by Early Winter's wind.

Sarah Naber

The Rower

The Rower's hands are strong,
tan, and callused with hardened palms.
Wide fingers resting on the wooden handles,
savoring the feel of the wood's grain
like the lock of a beloved's hair.

The oars of the boat charge through the waves
like melodious laughter
that rings against the water.
The rower's strong grace,
gently sliding the oars
down and back and up,
with their half revolutions in the air
releasing joyful water drops back into the sea.

Peace can be discovered in the
brown wooden strength of the oars
and the aqua chortle of the water
as it flows around the boat,
driven by the callused hands
of the magical Rower.

Sarah Naber

Block.

What does one write when there's
Nothing. I guess one would write
A love poem or rhyme a limerick.
I'm sorry to say I can't do this today.
Perhaps tomorrow I may. But now
I shall concentrate on the words. I could
String them along that happy parallel
That matches my emotion
Or I could
Just plop
Them down
One by one and
See if they fit
Together.
I could write of rain and of faith. I could
Compose a religious oratory with flowers
And salvation. I could speak softly of
Death and its dim light.
I could metaphorize the world or I could
Just let it be.

Carl Velzke

A Sister on Loan

My sister, Lisa, died at age two. Brought into the world three months prematurely, her body fought to "catch-up" the rest of her short life. The repercussions of prematurity were pain-filled for Lisa. I often wonder how her tiny body endured the constant pain. Only six inches long at birth, my dad could hold her in his large hands. The nurses and doctors would not allow me to hold her, however, because she might slip out of my four-year old arms. Sometimes, though, my mom would sneak me into the intensive care unit and drape a yellow gown around me. I would then crawl onto her lap and cradle my little sister in my arms.

Lisa screamed a lot from the pressure inside her head, Mom told me. I hated to hear her scream, and sometimes she wouldn't stop. Mom said she was very sick and hurt inside. I wanted to help her, but I couldn't. She screamed in the hospital so much that they had to place her in a single-person room where my mom sat by her incubator attempting to do all she could to ease Lisa's pain and provide a mother's security and comfort. The doctors told Mom to leave Lisa and just let her die, but Mom never did. I'm thankful Lisa was never alone.

Sometimes Lisa screamed less and her body seemed to grow outside and heal inside. Then the doctors would let my mom take her home for a while. At home, I loved to play with her. I pushed her around in my baby-doll stroller and pretended that she was my baby. I loved to talk to her through the bars of her crib as she squealed and giggled.

Lisa loved noisy rattles and the bells we attached to her tiny wrists that jingled when she waved her arms in the air. She also loved her "bird toy" that chirped happily when we plugged it into an outlet. Lisa was so smart, I thought. She could tell by the sound of our footsteps on the hardwood floor whether Mom, Dad or I were coming into the bedroom, although her eyes never knew what we looked like. Once she heard one of us coming, she would start squealing, kicking her feet in the air and flailing her arms.

Unfortunately, Lisa's visits home were always short. After only a few weeks at home, she and Mom would return to the hospital. There Lisa would undergo yet another of the sixteen surgeries of her two-year life. I kept thinking that she would get better, but each surgery made her scream even more.

Somehow, I think Lisa's short visits home enabled me to cope better with her death because I had grown accustomed to her leaving. When she was home, it was like entertaining a guest. I stood silently by my parents' sides at her funeral while they sang hymns. It seemed strange to hear people singing, but the familiar tunes and words were reassuring.

I often stoop beside Lisa's grave where my innocent eyes first tasted the bitterness of loss. I do not recall crying when she died, but now every time I see the headstone over her grave by the now tall apple tree, I cry. As I pull off the grass trying to grow over her headstone and brush off the dirt, I always find myself longing to see her and say the words my four-year old lips were too young to utter: I love you. I think she was a sister on loan from heaven, but like my favorite houseguests, she just didn't stay long enough.

Angela Marie Anderson

Marie's Refrigerator

In her kitchen, next to the sink, I find the large white refrigerator. The front is completely covered with pictures of children she has cared for.

Marie explains the Wal-Mart picture of a four-month old baby boy whose single mom decided to give him up for adoption. He stayed only two weeks. Then the caseworker found him a permanent home.

I ask about the senior picture of a young woman, Tabatha. Now nineteen and on her own, she was theirs for over nine years. Her parents had been in jail most of her life. After high school she ventured out on her own, no one knows where.

Marie also points out a photograph of a little boy, seven-year old Josh, holding a red truck which almost matched his hair. His temper didn't match his sweet face. His parents had abused him, changing a nice little boy into a terror who challenged the limits of patience. He stayed for a year. Then his parents regained custody.

She has mothered each face without condition since those who gave them life can't or won't.

She cries when each child leaves. Good-bye holding the possibility of never knowing where their future will take them.

She didn't give birth to them, these children she cares for. But she is their mother, even though they are not her children.

Lisa Bouwman

Turn Down the Radio!

We hated each other, or at least we thought that we did. When we were growing up, my older sister and I fought constantly. We must have driven our poor parents insane because we would keep arguing about the same "problems." Maybe it was because we were so close in age - only one and a half years between us. Maybe we both just wanted to be right all the time.

Whatever the reason, we fought. For the first few years, we argued about the swings in our backyard. My dad had built a swing set with two swings - one for each little girl so we would not have to share. But one swing was nicer than the other one. It was a real swing with a flat board for the seat, unlike the other wooden bucket seat. The problem was that in the bucket seat the swinger couldn't lean back, and so they couldn't pump.

So we would fight about who got the good swing and who had to ride in the "bucket." Anna always managed to win these miniature wars. Back then I thought that she won because she was older, but now I realize that age had nothing to do with it. Anna was just a better fighter. Now we were okay kids, and we knew not to ever physically hit each other. But verbally, Anna had

me beat. She could argue and debate with the best of them. Anna also had guilt trips down to a science. I just didn't have sharply honed verbal skills like my sister.

Later, when we entered high school, Anna was still winning a lot of the time. We didn't argue about the swings anymore. It was not because we matured, but we moved to a different house where there weren't any swings. Besides we were in high school and had no desire to soar to great heights every day in a swing - we wanted to go in a car. But, unlike the two swings, there was not a car for each of us - Anna and I had to share. Every day on the way to school, we would argue about the volume of the radio in our car.

I always wanted the radio on softly - playing peaceful music that eased me into the world gradually. Being sleepy almost every morning, I got as much sleep as I could and tended to get up late. Anna, on the other hand, was an early riser and so she was fairly awake by the time we left for school. And she was hardly ever in the mood for sleepy, peaceful music. Instead, she wanted to listen to the exciting, get you moving music that sounded like aerobic videos. So we had disagreements about the

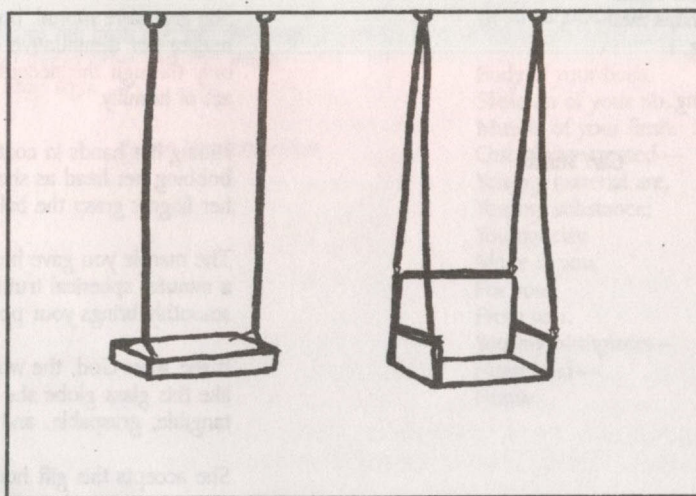
volume of the radio. Having just gotten up, I wanted it soft; she wanted it loud. Guess who always won those arguments--Anna.

So now I write. Why? Because I can express myself so much better in written words than in spoken ones. Some people, like my sister, have the ability to publicly debate and argue with other people face to face. I prefer to do my arguing with safe memos and essays in which my thoughts are clearly explained and considered. On paper, I don't have to play a verbal tennis match with another person.

I was always like this. Throughout school, I would write my boyfriends notes in order to break up with them. To send out a Dear John note was so much less intimidating than actually talking to them or calling them. In a letter, I could get it all out and think about exactly how I wanted to say everything. Nothing would just pop out of my mouth. It was all planned.

I would much rather write Anna a letter asking her to turn the radio down than to tell her directly to her face.

Sarah Naber



Old and Waiting

Abandoned, a square of sidewalk
Waits for a child bearing chalk.
My silent voyage commences from cement.
A journey into waiting, into
An alley.
Not a dark alley, dismal and
deathly,
but sunlit, still and inviting.

Two garages share a pile of
Firewood.
Soon winter will welcome
The logs with a flame.
For now I admire a sun filled
Sky and watch the waiting world
As it's presented to me.

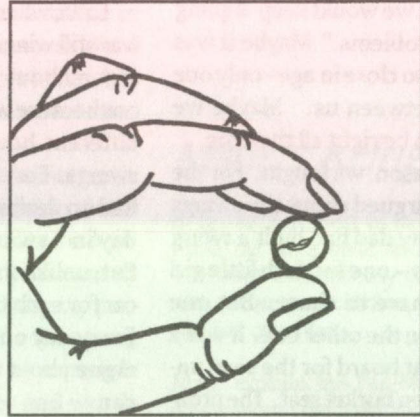
Resplendent flowers
Sing their last song.
They're waiting for yet
Another choking frost to
Blanket the flower beds.

In another alley,
A fishing boat without water,
Poles hanging out the side.
Garden without rain.
Waiting.

A Ford Holiday Rambler waits
For another holiday, or festival.
Unseen, a windmill prepares for
The next tulip parade.
It faces southeast,
Proudly.

The breeze sways a lonely swing,
Cleverly beckoning the chalk-
Toting child. Or perhaps me.
But I no longer swing, I
Can't yell at recess.
I'm old and I'm waiting.

Carl Velzke



Grasping Humility

English teacher by profession,
you offer your meek critique
to ears of a student
deafened by pride.

Example of Grace by extension,
you maintain she is not
the divine God, independently capable
of any grand act or sublime idea.

She is a mere mortal, bound to
realize her diminutive divinity
only through the necessary
act of humility.

Hiding her hands in coat pockets,
bobbing her head as she walks,
her fingers grasp the bald orb.

The marble you gave her in class--
a minute, spherical truth, now
smoothly brings your point to her mind.

If she *were* God, the world would seem
like this glass globe she now rolls in her hand:
tangible, graspable, and easily understandable.

She accepts this gift humbly.

Amanda Baker

Sioux Summer

Only nine years old when I first swung up bareback
at dawn with a band of Sioux children on spirited horses.
Mornings were filled with galloping over vast Dakota prairie.

At highest sun we loped through creeks, splashing rainbows.
Horses grazed along the banks while overripe mulberries stained
our fingers, and rosehips lured us with their sweet strawberry taste.

We carefully picked yellow flowers off cacti in afternoon sun.
If pricked, we pretended it didn't hurt.
Then we rode along worn deer trails toward home.

At dusk, Rosa White Lightning and Sunny Running Horse
put on beads and feathers to dance.
I learned the heavy steps in time to the drum.

My braid was as long as theirs, but bright blond.
The hot months had kindly bronzed my skin to match my friends'.
I wished I could change my name to mean something.

Summer ended forever.
We were forced to learn about Louis XIV and taught to tell time
with a clock.

Laura Whitwer

Newkirk, Iowa

A child on a tricycle watches me from a gravel driveway
as I drive past the way all things drive past this place,
rolling through the one stop sign.

Lynae Vandermeulen

Homesick

(a love poem from a woman to a man)

Body of your body,
Skeleton of your rib,
Muscle of your flesh.
Out of you created—
You my material are,
You my substance,
You my clay.
Made of you,
For you,
From you.
You my birthplace—
Homeland—
Home.

Colette Johnson

Outside My Window

The red truck slowly wound around each curve of the paved highway. The thick, Washington forest hid the vistas ahead, delighting in its ability to control my sense of expectation. The lush greenness out the window invited exploration and discovery. In my excitement, I chattered and squealed incessantly, unable to control my mounting emotions that erupted in bursts from my vocal chords. Dreaming of this day for much of my life, I intently looked out the truck's window, afraid some detail would escape my notice.

I spent the first eighteen years of my life dreaming. Caged within, I felt like a prisoner looking through a small window in her cell at the world outside. I knew that reality existed behind my bars, but I was uncertain if that reality extended to the world outside. Perhaps the view beyond my own window existed only in my dreams.

I finally escaped the prison of my past when I came to Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa. Nearly twelve hours away from my so-called "home" in Colorado Springs, Colorado, college thrust me into the world that previously only existed outside my window. As I breathed freedom, I began to live.

Here, my father could not control my life. Here I could make friends and not worry about bringing them home. Here I could involve myself in clubs and Bible studies because dad would never know. Here, I could share freely about my past without the fear of dad finding out. Here, I would have fun with my peers and not feel guilty. Freedom . . . it felt so good.

Unchained, I spent the first three years of college learning how to live. I desperately tried to "catch up" on the life dad had deprived me of. I formed close and lasting friendships and began to trust people. My professors and peers encouraged me to work through my abusive past and to re-evaluate my engrained thinking patterns. I gradually began to discover who I was. Each small step I took moved me closer to real freedom.

So, when my best friend, Lisa, invited me to her home in Washington for our Christmas break my senior year, I readily accepted

and took another step outside my window. When I arrived at the Seattle airport, her family embraced me. I quickly fell in love with them. The Steiners included me in every family gathering. Like an adopted child, they fed, housed, and loved me. On Christmas morning, I held back the tears as I opened the stack of gifts they purchased for me. For the first time in my life, I experienced a real family and home.

December 31 marked the fulfillment of a dream and the highlight of the visit, however, because Lisa drove me to see the ocean for the first time. Ever since childhood, I had dreamt of the ocean, longing to look out at its endlessness. The drive to the water provided ample time for reflection. Most bodies of water eventually converge in the ocean; my dreams had long flowed there too.

As a young girl, I remember my mom telling me the story of her ride across the ocean when her family moved to Japan. The boat's rock had given her a terrible case of seasickness that did not subside quickly. Mom told me about the white bag that she had to carry everywhere and the saltine crackers that she constantly ate while on the ship. I remember thinking to myself every time she told me that story, "the ocean could never make me sick," and I would picture myself on the deck of a large ship, breathing the fresh smell of salt water, blonde hair blowing in the ocean's breeze.

In middle school, I began taking walks in the rain. The raindrops not only washed my face, they cleansed me. The loud pattering on the sidewalk drowned out the questions and fears that plagued me. The falling drops embraced me, uniting with my own tears, chasing away their salty flavor.

Every summer, my family visited my grandparents in Arizona. My grandparents had a boat, so much of the vacation was spent on the water. I looked forward to the hot days spent speeding through the blue waves. My favorite place to ride was at the bow. There the air pressure flattened my face, and the water cascaded into the boat each time we rode into a large wave. Every time, I imagined that I was really riding on the ocean. When grandpa would tire of captaining up through the water, I felt like

crying. I wished the rides in the boat would never end. The water provided a form of release for me.

As a child, I remember taking long walks by mountain streams or silently lying beside a pool of water. The sound of water trickling across rocks or crashing over a cliff calmed my emotions. I recall high mountain lakes where the jumping trout left circles. I can still hear the frogs that croaked in the pond behind my old house every spring. In these times of reflection, I dreamt of someday living in Maine where the water would crash into rather than trickle over rocks.

I was still chattering excitedly as the red truck rounded the final curve. Suddenly, a gesture from Lisa abruptly closed my mouth. Lisa smiled mysteriously, pressing her forefinger to her lips. "Shhh." She pulled over to the side of the road. A bridge up ahead caught my attention. Trembling, I opened my door and hopped to the ground. A sign momentarily distracted me: "Deception Pass," but I continued walking.

Reaching the bridge, my hand grasped the rail and slid beside me. The trees suddenly pushed back their curtains to reveal a scene I had been attempting to envision on the stage of my mind since childhood. I held my breath, thankful for the silence. A refracted light beam bounced to my eyes, making them twinkle. I slowly looked up, placing both hands on the rail, now in front of me.

There it was—the ocean. Robed in grandeur, the sun beamed upon it like a spotlight. As I brushed away the tears clouding my eyes, memories of the past again flooded the corridors of my mind, and I sighed. The moment I had waited twenty-two years for had finally arrived. Joy engulfed me. I was free. The ocean lay before me as proof.

With a grateful heart, I slowly walked away, praising the Creator of such vastness and beauty. I filled my lungs with the damp, salty air before climbing back into the truck, thankful to be alive. Speechless, I stared at the ocean as we drove away, knowing the deception of my past had passed. The ocean was real, just as I was free.

Star Thrower in a Pond

The Joy of Fall

The leaves that plunge
are dyed in brown,
weaving a carpet
for fall's playground.

Tom Truesdell

The Remaining Leaf on an Oak Tree

Whipped by the wind,
the rusted leaf desperately
clings to the branch,
resisting gravity's certain weight.

Tom Truesdell

The Risen Son

I awoke again to the glorious sunrise,
A host of hues danced before my eyes.
I ran to tell others that they might see
The wonderful gift that God had shown me.

But they were all busy with early morning chores
Meaningless tasks kept them in doors.
So I returned alone to the beauty of God's morn
I speak to my Savior disheartened, forlorn.

For, minute by minute, and day by day—
Our time here on earth is slipping away.
God's numbered our hours, and we must use
Each blessed hour in a way He would choose.

Trivial tasks are accomplished in vain
And Earthly rewards to us are no gain.
So, celebrate each day taking time for the Lord,
For God's promise says "Great is your reward."

And by the time I had finished saying my prayer
I looked in the sky—no bright colors were there.
Tomorrow too will soon be gone
The Gospel of Christ must be passed on.

For just as the Sun had risen that day
The Son has risen and will take us away.
But, will we be ready, will our tasks be complete—
When it's time to surrender, while kneeling at Christ's feet?

Eventide Production

Waiting in the wings, nervous,
Moments from show time.
Delicate cirrus clouds feather
Across
The icy blue sky.

Waves ripple toward the shore
A silent fog slips in from
Behind tall pines.
Flowers lift their heads one last time
Heavenward for instruction.
Smiling, He thanks them for their beauty
Kisses them on their pollen covered cheeks

Rocks, in a beauty of their own, sit
Stone-faced and sharp.
Lodgepole pine and aspen quiver
With the nervous wind.
Mountains peek around the curtain
Very few showed tonight.
Saddened, He makes His move.

Deer, loon and bear
Search the sky.
He begins quietly,
First directing His
Star
To center stage.
She floats downward
Slips behind the stroked clouds.

He motions the colors
Arranges their positions.
Splashes them on every living
Creature.
The rocks
Replace their stern demeanor
With vibrancy and shade.

Water ripples a rainbow.
Sheets of light pour onto the
Crust of the earth.
He removes His star briefly.
She relaxes before the finale.

Suddenly, after darkness seemed
Imminent, His star returns.
She shatters the sky with color and
Light.
Rosy fog lifts above the trees.
Day and Night are one.

Carl Velzke

The Lunchbox

It was only plastic, blue and shiny,
with silver clasps and a matching thermos.

It had a printed picture once
of Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse,
but over years of lonely lunches
in the corner of the lunch room,
I scraped them off with my fingernail.
I didn't need to pretend it was Mickey
or Donald I was talking to.

Every morning, it was my companion
on my way to school, full of sticky peanut butter
and red apples. And every night there was nothing left
but Ziploc bags saved from the trash for Mother to reuse.

It was only plastic, but is it my fault
I had nowhere better then to keep my heart?
Nowhere else it might be safe?
Nowhere else so daily refilled with hope?

Lynae Vandermeulen

Wite-Out

White mercy angels tiptoe down the wings,
peeking into patients' rooms on 2:00 AM rounds.

A light-silver, splintered from the hall, slices bed 109.

The chalky skin summons us—
creep in. Draw back the ivory sheets.

The charge nurse swears in sharp whispers.

After the yawning coroner signs the certificate,
the closed chart is filed in Medical Records.

The ebony station wagon slips back into the abyss of night.

I hunt for clean linen—
lift sheet, draw sheet, and pillowcase.

We begin bleaching the alabaster walls of 109.

By 4:00 AM I have corrected all the paperwork—
charge sheet, dietary sheet, and census,

with Wite-out—thick and creamy, like dandelion blood.

Laura Whitwer

Fishing

The strong, fresh scent of pine lingers
peacefully in the air,
and the small waterfall steadily skips from one
stone to the other,
a soft murmur in the background of our picnic
conversation.
"What are you thinking about?" I ask, as usual.
"Nothing," you answer, as usual.

A fish jumps in the river, tempting us to catch
him.

You stand and take my hand,
leading me patiently over jagged rocks,
back to the riverbank.
You watch my tentative movements adoringly,
and you smile tenderly,
as if everything you want is here.

I cautiously let your hand go and watch
as you cast your line smoothly, a continuous
motion,
the rod one with your arm.
The line gracefully unravels to a perfect arc,
and you release the button naturally.
I lift my rod and cast my line carefully,
a city girl still learning when to let go.

Star Thrower in a Pond

"There are not many come this far," I said, groping in a sudden embarrassment for words. "Do you collect?"

"Only like this," he said softly, gesturing amidst the wreckage of the shore. "And only for the living." He stooped again, oblivious of my curiosity, and skipped another star neatly across the water.

--Loren Easley "The Star Thrower"

So, do I collect for the living or the dead? That question could have been reflexive, but I would not have wanted to share my answer as openly as the man on the shores of Costabel does, for he knew he was collecting the right thing -- the living who are dying, but I am not sure about my answer.

Am I searching the shores of life to save the dying wreckage of humanity that I find there or am I content to believe the façade that the dying wear to hide their fading?

For so long I have watched that façade. I have not questioned, not wondered, not asked. They looked fine, so I assumed.

The starfish know that they are going to die, unless someone throws them back to the life-giving waves. They have come to accept this fate, but my friends don't know that they are dying. If they do, they are too afraid to not hide it. By the world's standards, they are too far out to sea, swimming in the aqua green waves to ever be washed on the shore and choked by the mud.

Or at least that's what I always liked to think.

But they are dying and they know. But only they know. Everyone else sees the mask of them swimming with airy sea plants and golden fish that they put up solely for our viewing pleasure. They are dying faster than the washed up lives because they are being sucked in from a great chasm beneath them and they don't even know what way to swim.

They can't swim back out into the ocean because they aren't washed on the shore. They are in the ocean and it is killing them.

Look at the man power-walking past in his three-piece suit and tie. No one would ever guess that he has the silty mud of shore sliding up to steadily choke him. He looks like he just stepped out of an office. He did. It was an unemployment office.

Craig is looking for work because he has four children, two birds, a dog, three cars, a pool, and a house to keep up. He could always do it on his executive paycheck. But Herman Miller Company cut back.

"We just can't stay afloat with so many high paying positions."

"The company can't handle so many executives. We have to cut back."

"We have to cut back."

"We have to cut back."

Hearing it more often doesn't make it easier. Craig didn't make the cut. He had the looks, the outfit, the debonair smile, but

he didn't have the job. Now he dresses up in his same suit and tie everyday to go to the unemployment offices.

He is dying.

Not on the outside. He looks like he is handling it all so well. "How's it going, Craig?" "Just fine Stan, but the stock market is low."

The last words of a terminally ill man: "the stock market is low."

There are a lot of Craigs in my life. And a lot of Angies. And Bobs. And Davids. But am I trying to save them? No, I simply go on trips to save the people who I actually see lying on the beaches, smothered with the encroaching sand.

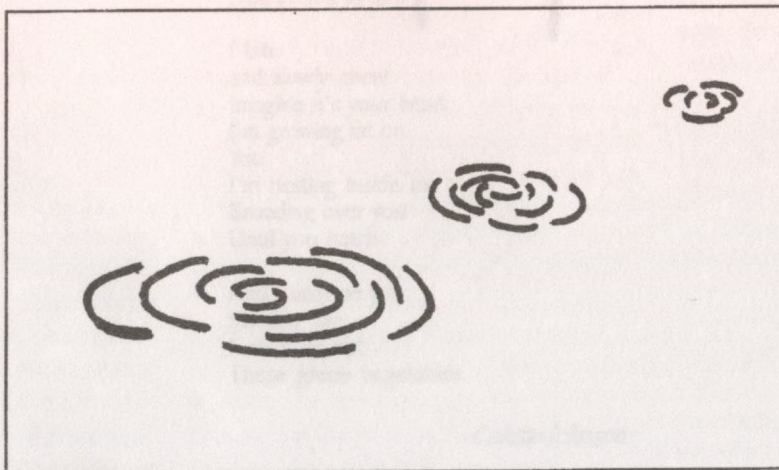
That is the problem. I travel all the way to Costabel to try to save some -- to collect the living. But Costabel is here. Down the street. Down the road.

But I don't think to look at the Costabel that is growing in my own backyard. I want the long distance travel to save the dying on a different beach and throw back the dying who live on a foreign shore.

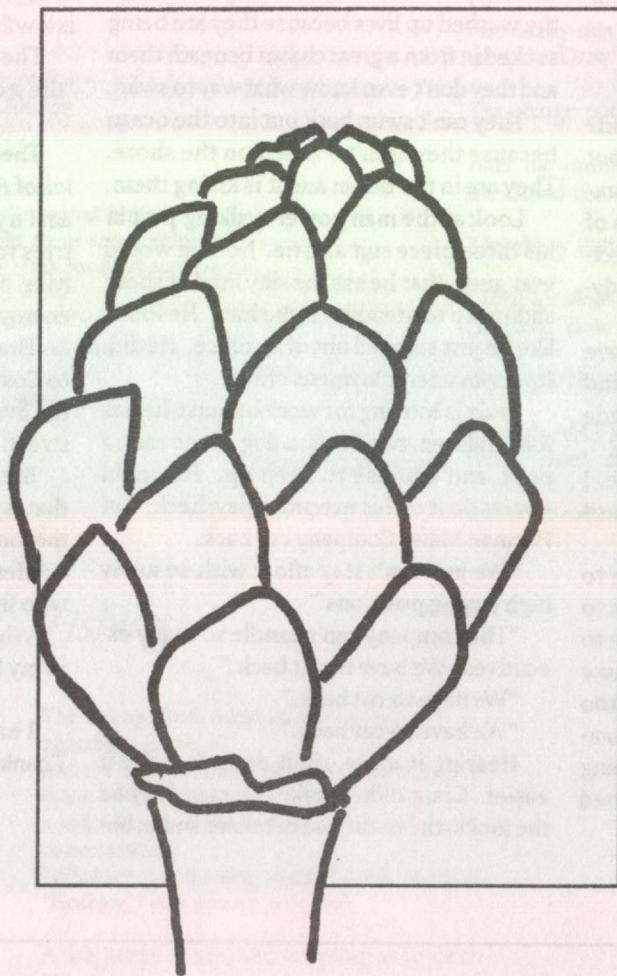
Why can't I be a star thrower in the pond in my backyard?

I have learned the joy of writing again. Thank-you for teaching me how to leap.

Sarah Naber



Star Thrower in a Pond



In Vain

What a thing of darkness is a tree
where every leaf casts shadows downward
through twig and stem and branch
until mere wood can bear the weight no longer
and drops its load of shadow on the ground.

How strange to be a leaf, forever caught between the spheres
and Janus-faced, half always light, half darkness;
half reveling in sun that slowly saps and dries,
longing to break its shadow's tether, to fly upwards, and to burn,
half watching shadow's downward plunge and wishing the sun's push
would send it after, to embrace the wide, great-hearted ground.

When Autumn, full of burns and plunges, comes,
who sees in windy swirls of leaves a thousand prayers half-answered?
In leaves that burn and crack, but fall instead of flying.
In leaves that fall but slowly and glance off the hardening ground.
In leaves tossed over, over by the wind beneath the indiscriminate sun.
In leaves that sleep in dreamless piles beneath the veining shadows of bare trees.

1st Place Poetry, Lynae Vandermeulen

Artichoke Hearts

I eat artichoke hearts
And think of you
Bite cleanly through the marinated flesh
Light olive green
And layered
Like the little nesting oriental dolls
That swallow their younger siblings
Doll in doll in doll

I bite
and slowly chew
Imagine it's your heart
I'm growing fat on
You
I'm nesting inside me
Brooding over you
Until you hatch

And I imagine you
Sending me
Not roses but
These green vegetables.

Colette Johnson

Crush

"Run faster!" my friend exclaimed as she led me blindly through the night. Eyes squeezed tightly shut and running full force, I engaged happily in the Trust game that my girlfriend and I competed in against our two guy friends. One person in each pair was to be the guide while the partner followed faithfully with eyes closed.

In the climax of the race to the finish my mind somehow mixed up my friend's instructions to turn to the right as I found myself instead jumping, not turning, smack into the garage of a house. I imagine it hurt, yet I do not remember the pain. Nor do I dwell on the fact that there is no conceivable way that those two guys could have run that fast when one of them had his eyes closed. (All boys cheat).

No, my attention remained focused on the fact that one of the boys we were racing against was *Matthew Mayer*. This guy had my heart captured from the minute he moved to town in the first grade. I remember that day his family first arrived. I discovered that this strapping blonde-haired boy who could play kickball with the best of them would be living only blocks away from my house.

Yes, I had a crush on Matt. It began with our encounters each day after school when the neighborhood kids would get a game of softball or kickball going. Matt's rosy cheeks attested to the intense sweat and work that he exerted to help his team claim another all-important victory. His tossed hair was enough to grab any girl's attention. Who wouldn't have a crush on a guy who obviously put that much dedication into a whiffleball game for the sake of his teammates?

It wasn't long before I learned that this admiration was mutual. Through the help of a friend who told a friend and eventually a couple of love notes, Matt and I were "going out"--as much as two kids in the fifth grade can "go out."

This love escapade did not last forever, however, and the junior high years found us each expanding our horizons by dating a few others. This carried on into our early high school years as well. He dated a few of my friends, and I dated a few of his.

Even still, I had never totally let my affec-

tion for him escape from my heart. It was always there along with a taste of jealousy for each of his girlfriends, but we were still close friends on into high school and often shared our joys and problems with each other.

I remember one night in particular. My heart ached as we sat in my basement one evening and he discussed his fondness for Jenny, a girl who was so obviously wrong for him. He sat on one end of the brown couch, and I sat on the other.

"Berly," he said. (Berly has long been his nickname for me). "I don't know what to do."

He looked at me. I stared back, speechless.

"I mean, I think she's a cool girl. She's outgoing and stuff. Do you think I should just go for it? Do you think I should just ask her out and be done with it?" he questioned.

Trapped. I had to respond.

Not looking him in the face, I somehow managed to utter, "She sounds like a great girl, Matt." I made the comment, feeling that my heart had sunk to the bottom of my stomach. Not long after our basement conversation, Matt and Jenny began dating.

Matt and one of my very closest friends even dated in high school, and it was all I could do to hold back my envy of that relationship. My friend had moved to my town only a year or two prior to dating Matt. That was not the way it was supposed to be. *I* was the one who really liked him. *I* was the one who had known him and had the crush on him ever since I saw his first-grade finesse.

Eventually, though, things started rolling my way. My sophomore year of high school a rumor started making its way around that Matt, presently without girlfriend, was interested in me.

"Oh my gosh!" I exclaimed to one of my friends as she watched me excitedly bound into biology class.

"What's the deal?" she questioned with a smile.

I could not keep my elation inside a minute longer. In fact, I could hardly spit my story out I was filled with such laughter and my friends as she watched me excitedly bound into biology class.

"What's the deal?" she questioned with a smile.

I could not keep my elation inside a minute longer. In fact, I could hardly spit my story out because I was filled with such laughter and happiness.

"It's Matt. He likes me. I just found out that he likes me! He likes *me*. This is so incredible." My happiness was overflowing. I could not quit smiling. It was all I could do to sit still through biology class. But was the rumor true?

One source confirmed all doubt--Matt's best friend. So it *was* true. Matt had had a crush on me all of these years too. Nothing could stand in the way of us now--or so we thought.

Oddly enough, a classmate of Matt's and a very close friend of both Matt and me chose to reveal his feelings for me at the very same time as Matt did. I now had two of my dear friends practically in competition for my love. Was I distraught? Goodness no! This is every girl's dream! It did, however, present a dilemma. Hurt feelings and grudges were at stake. The situation needed to be handled delicately. I found myself dealing with the situation sooner than I expected.

"Kim, would you like to dance?" asked Cody at our winter high school dance.

"Sure." I walked out on the dance floor with my eyebrows raised in worry. What should I say? What will he say? How should I respond? The slow song began and he put his arms around my waist.

"Kim, you probably know this already, but I just wanted to tell you face-to-face that I like you."

Oh no.

"But I know that this is bad timing because I know that Matt likes you too. So I just want you to know that I understand if you two start dating. I just don't want to lose our friendship," Cody said.

My body sunk in relief. Now it was my turn to express what had been on my heart. My best friend Sarah had been in love with Cody since the day she could walk. I decided to seize the opportunity.

"Cody, you know Sarah might be a good one to turn your attention to. I have a feel-

ing she might say yes if you asked her out on a date," I suggested. Well, he took my advice, they began dating, and they stayed together all throughout high school and into college. In the meantime, Matt and I enjoyed spending more and more time together, but we still had not discussed openly what was going on between us—until one very special night.

Our boys' basketball team played a home game, and Matt was a starting forward for the team while I was a varsity cheerleader. After the game, I waited for him in the auditorium to come up from the locker room. When he appeared—dressed nicely in his slacks, shirt and tie—he asked me if I wanted to go driving around with him on the loop in town. It was what all the high schoolers did after a game, and I readily accepted the invitation.

The winter night was very cold, and I, still wearing only my cheerleading uniform with its not-so-long skirt, tried to stay warm as we climbed into his car.

"Wow. I am in Matthew Mayer's car driving around with him. Only him," I thought. We drove around in town for awhile and then Matt took a different route and started heading out of town. I was not sure where we were going. My body was tense with excitement and nervousness.

He stopped the car a few miles from town and just looked at me. I wondered if Matt could hear my heart pounding. The moment I had been waiting years for was about to happen. Matt grabbed my hand. He looked straight into my eyes and softly said to me, "Berly, I have been waiting for five years to do this."

And before I even had enough time to question "to do what?" Matthew Mayer, my crush, leaned over and kissed me.

Kimberly Ortman

Grandmother

From behind panes of glass
cut into four sections,
a seemingly easy puzzle,
her red hair flashes as
she approaches the door.

The buxom five-foot-nothing
chased the high life,
a band member, and a honeymoon
in the back of the bus,
as the band traveled
to Pasadena, San Gabriel,
and Covina.

But the Lawrence Welk show
was looking for a base guitar,
so the tuba man returned
home to the farm.
She sent him off
with a bundle of papers,
a tow headed girl and a cross-eyed boy.

Now, she returns, proceeded
by the odd birthday card—three weeks late—
to find that tow headed girl in me,
pinching my skin with flashy red nails,
digging to find the pieces she missed,
but they are no longer there.

Neenah Schuler

Grandpa's Funeral

As Grandma smooths Grandpa's hair
and reminds herself of the good Lord,
her twelve year old grandson
pours his first cup of coffee
into the Christy-Smith Funeral Home mug.
He adds six spoonfuls of sugar
hoping that his first adult beverage
will hide the childish tears
streaming from the corner of his eye
to the bottom of his chin
and dripping into his steaming cup.

Honorable Mention Poetry, Sara Lamb

Rapunzel

I knew, naturally,
it was not her choice
to be locked
in the castle tower,
waiting, until her hair
grew long enough,
so that a man
could climb up and rescue her.
How incredibly boring,
waiting every day,
wakeful of each inch of hair.
It must be presumed
that she read books,
learned Latin,
or studied music,
to pass the time.
And, when it did pass,
a man came
to save her?
To take her away to a castle
where she would be
a subservient devoted wife?
A woman can climb a rope of hair.
So, how come a woman
did not save her,
take her to Harvard,
where she could study,
become a doctor or,
possibly an engineer?
Then, she
could create castle towers
fit with elevators.

Neenah Schuler

Mica Rock

The suspended fog
is a gray haze over
the dew-soaked earth,
and the man—clothed
in a faded gray t-shirt
and green flannel
pants—paces
towards the shaded forest,
calling repeatedly.

He continues searching—
down the narrow and worn
path that he had explored
as a child—meandering
between the aged evergreens
until he sees the wrinkled man,
wearing denim overalls, staring
at the tinged leaves
of an oak tree.

The son stands still
and regards the father
who had forgotten
his name and his son.

Lowering his head as if
in prayer, the son notices
a mica rock resting
next to his sandeled foot.

The white sheet held
before his eye, he examines
how it clouds the light
and remembers a moment
when, as an unbound
child, he eagerly
presented the discovery

to the person
who was a father to him.

Placing the rock
in his open hand, he
is a child that walks
towards the forgetful man,
reaches for his trembling fingers,
and says, "Come on, let's go."

*Honorable Mention Poetry,
Tom Truesda;e*

heavenly bodies

your universe(and mine)not by will but by
collide,one balanced precariously
illuminating edges of time Space

hearts indelibly marking beating
weeping for,who knows but
souls cannotmustnotwillnot forget
sweet love's name,your name

my name,and i tangle in your smile of

stars hide under galaxies
(wherever you are come out)
eyes laugh lips dance hands
learn to know yours:can you
measure celestial spheres
with your kiss?

Abby Stevens

Haunted

Life is a dream within a dream,
A time to dance in the sun
And worry not about the night.
But when our waltz is done,
We are but ghosts
Who have only memories of life.

I dreamt a dream one night,
I waltzed alone in the corridors
Of a haunted manor-house,
Which was silent in regard and fear
Of the witching hour.
I danced until I saw a mirror,
And in the mirror I saw a face
I had never seen before.

The man in green brocade —
The clothes I knew already —
Was standing just behind me
And staring at my face
With his hate-filled eyes.
This ghost had haunted me for years,
And I had seen him oft before,
But never before this close or clear —
Always out of the corner of my eye.
Our eyes remained fixed on each other
Through the mirror's medium
For an instant or an eternity.
Then I laughed and awoke.

Foolish ghost, I still believe
Whenever I think of him
And when I see him from time to time —
To spend this waltz like that.
To rage at me with jealous hate
Because I have this life,
And life he now lacks.

Tami Suchy

Grandma V

The garage sale had just
Ended. The final items she
Left behind were now owned
by those who didn't know her. Her
Carefully crocheted pillows were
Gone.
Taken to rest on some other flowered couch.
Our step-Aunt chose some of the nicer
Items as did Aunt Mary-Ann and the others. They're older now
and so are
We. Yet I can still remember the feel
Of her carpet, the smell of her kitchen,
And the sound of Grandma V
Slamming her right bauer down on the
Flimsy table. Those nights,
Where time stood frozen,
Fed us sugar cookies and cranberry juice.
The next morning you would sit next to Grandma V at the early
service.
You were rewarded for singing nicely,
And I got a spanking
For clapping my shoes on the old oak pews.
You and I would race over to Grandma
V's and stare at the T.V. screen.
Back when wrestling was real and Hulk Hogan was our hero, we
would revel.
Who could have told us that "the
Body" would become a governor? No
One did, but that didn't stop it from
Happening.

No one told us that Grandma V could die. Yet when she got her
blood clot in her leg, we began to understand. She was taken to
Minneapolis for surgery. You came over and we played video
games. You were my brother until you left. After supper, we drove
up to see her. She smiled as if her leg was still there. Yet she
showed us that it indeed was not.
She lifted her leg and wiggled her little stump around and laughed.
I watched the television as the Twins
Played in the dome. Kirby made a game-saving catch and we all
cheered. The storm outside flashed lightning all around the
hospital. The lights and TV flickered and I wondered what would
happen if the electricity would go. Still, we had to leave Grandma
V and venture through the storm. The
Rain came down harder than pain upon us. Dad could hardly see
where the freeway was. We took the wrong exit and stopped for
directions. An hour later we pulled into our house where Grandma
V used to live.

Grandma V:

I would get up at four-thirty in the morning to feed those boys.
They needed a good meal for the work they would do. Grandpa
would take the boys out and milk the cows and feed the pigs. By
the time they'd finished, I'd have fresh walleye, blood sausage and
eggs ready for 'em. Mary Ann helped when she got older of
course. Milton was always a hard worker in the morning.

Gordon and Warren would always argue about
who'd done the most work. Hank just laughed
at them and did his part. They were fine boys-
-that's for sure! Then they began to leave our
home. They all spent time in the service and a
couple went to Korea. After those years they
each took to their own and started building
names for themselves. Hank and Gordy sure
liked their cars. So did Warren and Milton, but
they felt that farming was their strong suit. I
was so proud the day Warren purchased the
farm from Grandpa. We'd spent too much
blood and energy out there to see it go to
someone else. Grandpa and I moved out to
the lake and spent our last years together.
The children would come out and catch
sunnies and crappies and I would fry 'em up
quick. They taste best that way, you know.
You were born and a year later Grandpa died.
It hurt me dearly, but I believe it was a fair
trade. They moved me into this little house
squeezed between church and a bank.
Sometimes I couldn't figure out who I should
give my money to! I guess my money can go
to the bank but my heart will go to God.

We can be sure that her heart traveled the
path to God's house. I cried at the funeral.
Though it was not from the pain of loss but
rather my arm that you had punched. You were
bigger than me, and when we wrestled I
seldom won. I wasn't bitter when I came out
with a bruise or a scratch. I was always in safe
hands at Grandma V's house too. She would
comfort me quick so I could get back to
playing. She never complained. Even until
that last moment she wore a smile. With cold
gray hair and a fake foot, she smiled.
Just the way she smiled when we pretended to
give her communion when we were young.
You brought her cranberry juice and I unleav-
ened some Wonderbread. We gave her an
entire church service right there in her house.
A folding chair was our pulpit and a flowered
couch was her pew. We sang a hymn and you
read some scripture. Grandma V thought well
of the liturgy and offered us some cookies. We
were picked up and taken home. You lived
east of town and I to the west. The roads
we've traveled since were as winding as
Grandma V's veins. The wrinkled skin that
covered her told us where she'd been. The
last I touched her face was while she laid there
in the casket, silently, cold. I knew for sure
she was in heaven crocheting pillows out of
the clouds for God.

Carl Velzke

The Creek

The sweat rolls down the man's forehead in unhealthy proportions. Out of slumped shoulders his arms pull Armani clad knees to his chest. Under the caress of his old friend, the weeping willow, he tries to remember. But how can he? How can he possibly return to the days of his youth? Days of boundless freedom and endless adventure, days when this land was alive, days when the creek was his and he was the creek's. The willow had good reason to weep these days. Her weary trunk had split under the strain of time, and her once nimble branches now lay brittle and dry. The creek is gone. Dried up years ago. In fact he has a hard time even remembering if there was ever a creek here. Closing his eyes he leans back, hoping that the dry summer breeze will carry him back to the days of his youth.

This used to be the edge of town, that much he is certain of. His house, Billy's across the street, and Nathan's a couple of blocks down, sat on the edge of the small town. Billy had the biggest yard with the creek in the back dividing the property from the marshes beyond. They had the best of both worlds, he had always thought. Now dark brown condos sit where the marsh should be, and the soft meadow is gone, replaced by a Piggly Wiggly. Nothing is the way it used to be. Nothing is the way it should be. The big back yards have homes of their own now. He had heard a while back that Billy's place burned down, giving it a reason to be missing. But where is Nate's house? How could it just disappear? How had he gotten so old? Or was he just going senile? Where had the years gone? And why in the world can't he seem to remember his creek? All that remains is the old willow, which he leans against like a friend in need.

In the distance his hears the memory. Faint at first like a kitten's purr. He points his ear towards the parking lot, where the meadow should be, and listens. A queer ticking sound like a giant bumblebee rumbles in the distance mixed with a heavy dose of high-pitched banter. Misplaced and heavily repeated cuss words pepper the conversation as the boys ride into view. Wearing only

shorts and an occasional towel around their necks the boys sit atop their BMX's, baseball

cards stuck in the spokes, heading towards the pool. Suddenly the boys and their bikes are swallowed up by the meadow of his mind and the creek begins to trickle once again.

All at once he returned to those long summer afternoons when his mother grew weary of continual complaints and requests. During the heart of the summer the creek would nearly dry up. It began to smell that peculiar way creeks do, like Grandfather's cellar when it got too hot. Even the crawfish would stay hidden on days like this. Days when the sun inhaled the very life from all who defied its radiance. It was even too hot to go barefoot on days like this; the blacktop would burn your feet. He would seek refuge in the grass, but the grass too fell prey, growing sharp and brittle in the blistering heat. He had returned to the only place that could always cure his discontent. The creek was revived once again. The creek is alive!

As if he were a spectator in his own brain, he watched the drama of his childhood unfold. He sees the boy he once was. Alive and free, but wearing a scowl on his brow. As he watches the boy through his mind's eye he can almost feel himself sinking into the muck once again. Letting it ooze up between his toes, soothing his feet and somehow cooling his entire body. The boy wanders aimlessly, picking up an occasional rock, looking for crayfish. Eventually he comes to rest under an old weeping willow, finding solace in its shade. From his resting spot the boy quizzically inspects the cattails, which droop low in the summer heat. Slowly the boy's thoughts begin to resonate in the old man's ears. They sound vaguely familiar.

On days like this Billy and Nate went with all the other boys to the swimming pool, but not this boy. The chlorine had stung his eyes once too often. The taste of the poisoned water hung on the tip of his tongue nearly as long as the blasted stuff swam in his ears! No matter how far he pushed the Q-Tip, it still couldn't reach. Just the thought

of that horrid place made him ram his hands even further into his blue jean pockets. How could anyone possibly like going to there? He wasn't afraid, that's for sure! And whoever said he was is stupid! He just didn't like it there that's all, why was that so hard to believe. Besides, if he didn't play at the creek who would?

The man's eyes slowly open once again, awakened by a child's laughter. Glancing

over his shoulder he watches as another group of towel clad kids ride by. He looks up at the withered old tree. How he wishes she would still be tall and strong. But she is old and tired too. He couldn't help feeling like it was his fault somehow. If only he had not moved away. If only the creek had a voice to defend it. There will always be too many condos, too many supermarkets, too many swimming pools, but there can never ever be too many creeks.

The summer breeze brings no comfort. It carries no solace. The sun continues to beat down. The man's head feels burnt. In the distance another herd of kids curses by. The man rises; takes one last look around, letting out a long exhale. He pats the willow softly. Slowly he bends over to pick up the suit coat, tossing it over his shoulder the man turns and heads towards the Piggly Wiggly. He's thirsty.

Gary Hanson

Key Change

Falls' symphonic colors,
an arioso of
amber

orange
umber
leaves

drifting to the soft sways,
only to be muted,
by a white layer of frost,

a rest,
before the winter wind howls,
its minor key.

Neenah Schuler

Syncopation

Ssyynn-CO-pation
stress NOT on the beat.

Slowly SYN sound stretches
then CO! (pation).

Ssyynn-CO-pation
stress NOT on the beat.

Syn HOLD copation
aann-TIS-ipation,

Ssyynn-CO-pation
stress NOT on the beat.

Laura Whitwer

Waterfalling

On a cool October night,
we sat distanced
on a
terraced cliff
beside a waterfall.

Your hope to commit
ourselves to each other
stirred my
nerves into a shiver.
Misinterpreting this shudder,
you passed me your sweater
as you offered your hand.

I reached out and accepted

the sweater and turned my
eyes from yours
looking toward the
water rushing from
the mouth
of jagged rocks.

I watched some boys flirting
with the fatal power of the falls.
One stood on the brink of bounding,
poised to leap. Breaking his

intensity, he shifted
back and forth
on his feet,
preparing to jump
across the torrid stream.

How scared is the boy,
I wondered, not knowing
where he will land
when he finally falls
past *his* cliff
of no return?

Amanda Baker

Mother's Hands

Her hands click, ticktick, click
as the long needles weave,
loop after loop
never dropping a stitch.
She continues
click, ticktick, click
a green baby's blanket,
a red and white gingham
yarn-haired doll,
a log cabin quilt on each bed.
She tells you
everything has its time,
its place,
like the cross-stitched
piano above the piano.
A crocheted afghan,
envelopes you in warmth,
as she lifts
each linen, each monogrammed towel
into the wooden chest.
Then, she turns to the dress,
ivory and lace
click, ticktick, click,
each pearl
hand sewn into the fabric,
and it, too soon, is completed.

Neenah Schuler

Dad's Pockets

Sitting on her father's lap,
she explores his pockets,
wondering what Dad does
with these items.

Always in Dad's front pocket:
The small screwdriver
with a magnetized tip,
a child finds many possibilities
to attract with the magnet,
attaching it to metal paper clips,
and pretty silver pens.
There's his multiple pens, with their clips
attached to his pocket,
emblems on them from chemicals
used for Dad's job,
Conklin, Safeway,
and the Bou-Matic pen
with his shop's name,
Valley Dairy Farm Automation.
Dad insists the pens don't leave his lap,
or he won't have anything
to write out math problems,
bills and maps of ideas for the customers.
Then she finds the milk thermometer,
to pull in and out of its case,
and a calculator for big hands.

Now she searches for the bigger tools,
more toys, on the tool belt
that never leaves his side.
The large screwdriver, the pliers,
used to take apart and fix everything
from milking equipment for farmers,
to Mom's jobs for him
around the house, kitchen sinks,
dishwashers, vacuums, and the like.
And a measuring tape
to make sure everything fits.

Lisa Bouwman

Daddy's Arms

I crawl in my Father's lap,
feeling his strong arms
and heavenly peace.

This comfort and rest
will help me go back to life.
I don't come often enough
to see faithful love
in the smile of His eyes.

Here I have nothing to fear.
Problems can't touch me,
I can't get confused about
the chaos of the world,
it doesn't exist.
The decisions about
the love of my life,
and the worries about career,
fade in His light.

I simply cuddle up,
He calms the storm,
and I am assured.
I can't stay forever,
though I leave knowing
even if I fall
I can always return.

Lisa Bouman

Ulysses

He was a person often found with his hands encircling the plump waist of a coffee mug, caressing its sides with his thumb. And when he raised it to his lips to drink, he let the cup linger a bit there by his mouth. He liked books, too, although she had never seen him reading. She knew it because he looked almost musty and often stared off into space.

The truth of the matter was that he did like books, although he couldn't stand glossy covers. He liked mystery too. He had developed a habit of buying books from the used book store on 16th Street and reading only the middle twenty-four pages of each book. His mother didn't understand this and would try to get him to read a whole book sometime. He quoted a lot from the middle twenty-four pages of books he hadn't read the whole way through. Once, annoyed with his mother, he had set out to read all of Joyce's *Ulysses* backwards, starting with the last word, but about two weeks before Christmas vacation he gave up.

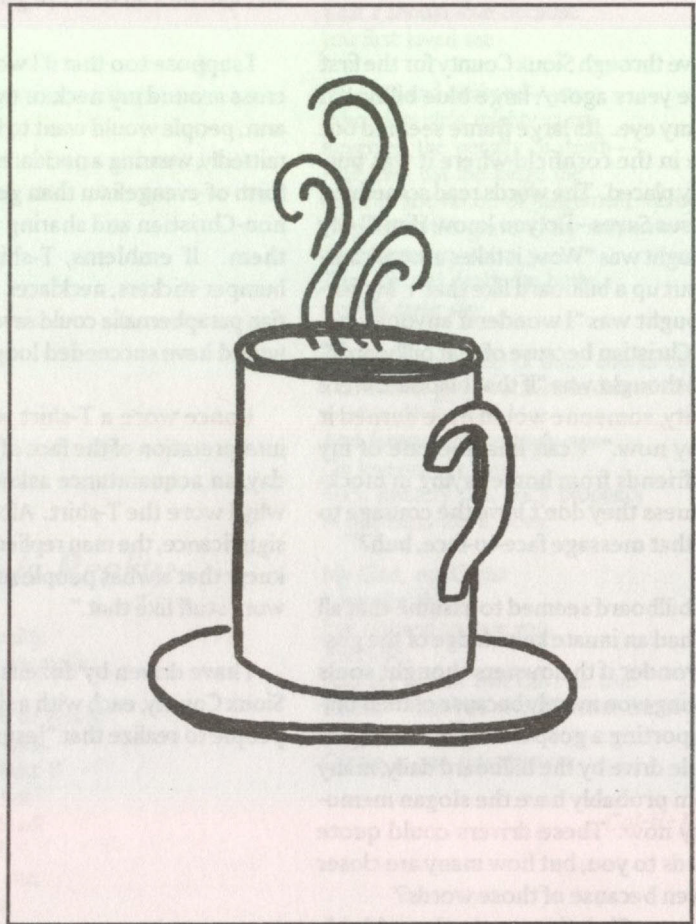
Three weeks before Christmas vacation he met her, and he didn't feel like impressing anyone anymore.

It's a strange fact that some people you meet and love, you want to impress. These people make tasks like reading *Ulysses* backward possible and even fun. When you love these people you do many things that are good conversation topics later. You go whitewater rafting when you'd normally make pudding.

But then, sometimes, you love someone and you don't want to impress them at all. Or at least you don't want to try. You just want to make chocolate pudding. And read your twenty-four pages, and never pretend you've read the whole book.

So he put *Ulysses* in the roadside book-drop of the library and went to the deli in the grocery store a couple of blocks over, and ordered coffee and drank it without ever letting the Styrofoam cup hover by his lips.

Colette Johnson



Christianity Absurd

To put up a billboard in your yard saying, "Jesus is the Way," a person must be a Christian with the desire to share the gospel with each person that drives by. A person must also put up several hundred dollars to have the billboard placed in the yard and the appropriate gospel slogan written on it. Nothing else is required. Sioux County is enumerated with farms displaying such billboards.

I drove through Sioux County for the first time five years ago. A large blue billboard caught my eye. Its large frame seemed out of place in the cornfield where it was purposefully placed. The words read something like: "Jesus Saves - Do you know Him?" My first thought was "Wow, it takes a lot of courage to put up a billboard like that". My second thought was "I wonder if anyone's become a Christian because of that billboard?" My final thought was "If that billboard were in the city, someone would have burned it down by now." I can imagine one of my atheist friends from home saying in mockery, "I guess they don't have the courage to tell me that message face-to-face, huh?"

The billboard seemed to assume that all drivers had an innate knowledge of the gospel. I wonder if the owners thought souls were being won merely because of their billboard sporting a gospel slogan. Hundreds of people drive by the billboard daily, many of whom probably have the slogan memorized by now. These drivers could quote the words to you, but how many are closer to Heaven because of those words?

The non-Christian reads the tabloids about the Tele-evangelists swindling money and the pro-life activists ransacking an abortion clinic. The hypocrisy they see behind these actions makes non-Christians angry. Then when a non-Christian drives by a billboard like the one I've described, I can hear them mumbling under their breath, "These people don't even know me, yet they feel they have the right to shove their religion down my throat".

The billboard reminds me of the bumper stickers saying "Abortion Kills Children" or "Abortion stops a beating heart" that well-meaning pro-life activists place on their cars.

I wonder how many of them have befriended a young girl who has become pregnant "accidentally". I also wonder how many young girls and women have decided to not abort their child because they read one of these bumper stickers one day. An adolescent mumbles, "Go ahead and preach at me, but my dad beats me up for things like this, and if my boyfriend finds out he'll leave me, and he's all that I've got."

I suppose too that if I would only wear a cross around my neck or tattoo one on my arm, people would want to know Jesus. Admittedly, wearing a necklace is a much easier form of evangelism than getting to know a non-Christian and sharing the gospel with them. If emblems, T-shirts, billboards, bumper stickers, necklaces and other Christian paraphernalia could save the world, they would have succeeded long ago.

I once wore a T-shirt with one artist's interpretation of the face of Jesus on it. One day, an acquaintance asked me to explain why I wore the T-shirt. After explaining its significance, the man replied, "Wow! I never knew that's what people meant when they wore stuff like that."

I have driven by dozens of billboards in Sioux County, each with a sincere appeal for people to realize that "Jesus is the Answer."

Each billboard seems to operate on the premise that the owners are somehow fulfilling "the great commission" by placing a billboard in their field. The slogans, however, never explain who Jesus is or what "being saved" entails. And the owners may never stand by the roadside offering free lemonade or a bedroom to stay in if one is short on cash and a long way from home. The billboards do, however, offer a "self-help book" type of answer to man's sinful plight: Jesus Saves. True, the answer is Jesus, but I wonder if Jesus is proud to see His name painted across the panels of a billboard.

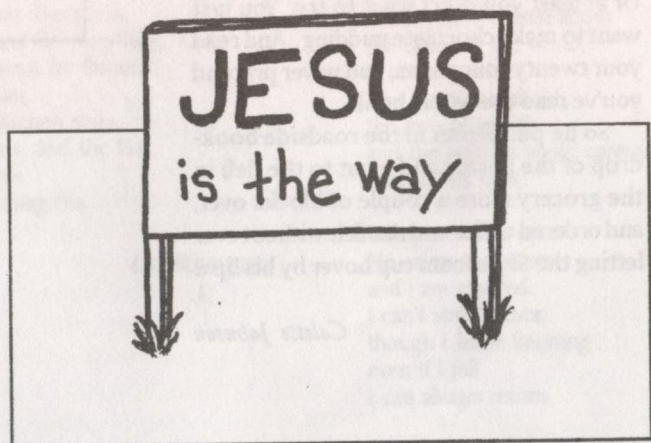
Many drivers have since passed that same billboard I first drove by five years ago. Perhaps an emotional woman or man will read the words someday, burst into tears and say to her spouse, "Oh, honey that's the answer! All of my life I've been wondering what the answer is. It's Jesus, honey!"

"Who's Jesus?" the other will likely reply.

"I don't know, honey, but I'm sure glad I know He's the answer."

Last summer I went to a Colorado Rockies baseball game. When my friends and I left the stadium, a street evangelist was shouting John 3:16 and various other verses at the crowd as we were leaving. As the crowd mocked him, the man began to shout the verses out even louder. I hung my head in shame, thinking, no wonder people dislike and even despise Christianity.

Angela Marie Anderson



Stella, What Do You Want?

Those girls in white aren't happy when I ask,
can I go home to Jim,
to my house with yellow flowers?
They say he died 23 years ago,
your house had to be sold.
This is your home now, Stella.
They show me pictures in my room
of people I don't know.
Those girls in white aren't happy when I call.
They bring me yellow pills.
Hands on hips, they say, I was just here.
Stella, what do you want?
Can I go home to Jim,
to my house with yellow flowers?

Laura Whitwer

Christ is Reality

Christ is Reality
But why do we make
Christianity
this pinnacle to reach?
We are humans
imitating Christ B
Christ was not
!Super Spiritual!
He just said-
Look this is me,
this is you in
Your pathetic
humanity
needing
Me

Katie Petersen

Untitled

How bold I am to say I love you, God.
How brazen
To offer you my love!
How could I dream to have my love requited
by you—Deity, Perfection.
And mystery of all to heat, to know
it is not my love that is requited
But I who requite your love for me
Oh bliss, oh mystery this:
That I should love because
you first loved me.

My God and husband—you
Who slew sin's mighty curse
Reversed the penalty of death—
And then did the judge die
Tight in the noose of judgement mercy
Trapped in the grave of my sin's cave
Great mystery this:
That life and death die both
on this same day

Then night and day of three counts done
The son of glory backwards comes through
death's dank shroud
And forward too to body new
Oh lover of my soul
Such mystery this, such prophecy
A deathless life is born.

My God, my Christ
I pray for this—
I've claimed to love you,
And I do,
And yet I know that can't be true
Unless—that you should teach me love
Holy dove of Spirit come
Create in me this mystery

Colette Johnson

These Things

Birds chirping. Children laughing. The stars shining. Janine was shut away from all of these things. Not a day went by that she did not think and wish that she had the inner vision to see all of these things.

The car came to pick up Janine. As always, she was ready, dressed up to the nines. Janine was rather beautiful, if a person stopped to think about it. Not many people ever did. It wasn't that she had a physical deformity, it was just that nobody really noticed her. A shame too, she was a really nice person. Janine and a friend, Rebecca, walk to the door and leave. They slowly walk down the seven steps from the door to the sidewalk. The night is cool with a slight breeze whistling through the trees. Bright stars shine in the sky, peering down on humanity, telling the world that there was peace to be found on the other side of the fence. Only Janine could not see this.

The party was like any other, just a group of adults enjoying each other's company. There was dancing, nothing too fast. This was a formal party put on by the old man Ryans. Edward Ryans was a rich, old curmudgeon who simply enjoyed watching young people have a good time. When a person gets to be somewhat above seventy years, most everybody is young. Having such an excess of money really wasn't doing him any good. Why not spend it so others can have a good time? Without a doubt, a good time was had by all, even Janine.

Some of the less obtuse, and much more observant gentlemen, called upon her to dance. At first she quietly demurred. But it was soon apparent that they were not going to stop asking. Janine resigned herself to her fate, and had a good time in spite of her prior plans. She danced most of the night away. Those men who had seen her before were now watching in disbelief. The quiet woman, who had always appeared to slip into the lonely recesses of shadow, had now stepped out into the light. What a sight it was. With a smile on her face and a twinkle in her eye, Janine appeared to the world as few had ever seen. Janine was beautiful.

Janine was still Janine, of course, so naturally she had no clue that any such transformation had occurred. She was simply having fun, not really knowing what that meant. The party ended, and Janine returned home

to her quiet life and not seeing the joys of life.

A couple of weeks later, the peace and emptiness of Janine's life was broken again. She was invited out for a dinner, and she actually accepted. It seems that night of dancing had brought something out in Janine. Nothing wild, but it was still a change. As time went on, Janine received offers and dates in increasing numbers. She accepted more and more of them.

She began to see some of the things that had been locked away from her. Even as a child, Janine had been unable to see the magic in the stars. But there was also magic in the trees and the flowers too, and Janine

felt it now. Somebody once said that it was the men who brought out the life in Janine. But it was life that brought out the beauty, and the life was brought out by that one party that was hosted by one foolish old man.

Two years later, Edward Ryans died at the age of seventy-nine. Later that week a funeral was held, but not many people knew about it. Not many people knew about him. The funeral was attended by only eight people, though it was open to the public. Among the mourners was a young woman standing in the back corner of the chapel . . . in the shadows.

Joe Sherry

The Success of General Custer, The Gambler.

The dice rolled out
Of the cup toward him like
An attacking army. The ensuing assault
Brought Custer to his knees.

His last chips lay silent on the felt-
Covered battlefield. Blood-red and bone-
White—stacked much like death. Powerful
No longer, for their numbers had diminished
Greatly.

The cold eyes of black guilt embraced by innocent.

White were drawn away with a long cane.
Accompanying
The dice were the cold lifeless forces that once were
Custer's. The final white chip was removed from Custer's
Reluctant grasp as smoke-gray clouds collapsed upon
The grass-green scene of carnage.

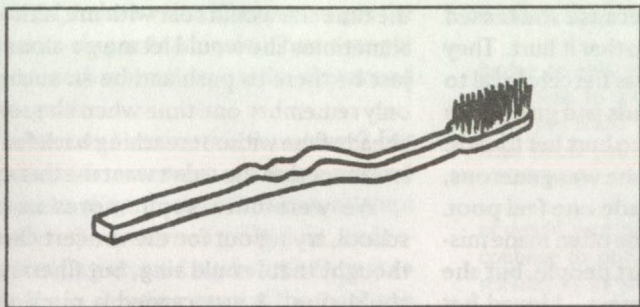
Custer then laid down his last coin on my bar in return for
A slug of whiskey. With his eyes cold and seemingly dead,
He thanked me, smiled and disintegrated into history.

Carl Velzke

The Dentist

He treated girls like toothbrushes,
trusting them to remove the bad taste
sometimes in the morning and rarely after lunch.
He frequently made them the last step before sleep,
finally forgetting them in hotel rooms.
Weary of where they'd been,
he preferred breaking them in
and bending their bristles.
Ignoring his mother's pleas to find a practical one
and instead picking the prettiest,
he was indifferent to their color and
fascinated by the variety of shapes.
He kept one at home and another at work,
always thinking of them as disposable.

Sara Lamb



Deli Poems

i.

Coupled they come
two by two,
Buying their coleslaw
and potato salad.
Nothing is new,
it's been this way since Eden.

And had there been a deli
in that garden,
The two would have come paired,
To buy their two pounds
of three-bean salad.

ii.

He came alone to the deli
Bought the mustard potato salad
And the four-piece chicken
And talked of you
With your blue eyes
And long, long hair,
And of your smile
That he says
Stretches across a room.

And this is just to let you,
That lady in Missouri know
That a deli clerk in Iowa
Knows all about you.

2nd Place Poetry,
Colette Johnson

Yet Another Tupperware Bowl

I'm whining to Mom again about being single.
As she washes the dishes and I dry them
she tells me again
that before she married my stepfather
he always told her that every pot has its top
and every kettle has its lid
and all a person has to do is find the right one.
I smile because she's said that so many times,
and each time I can only think of Tupperware.
There are so many more Tupperware bowls around than
pots or kettles.
As if reading my mind,
she pulls a clear Tupperware bowl out of the soapy water
and hands it to me.
I rinse the bubbles off and after drying it,
realize that it's the perfect size for the fruit, but
as I start to fill the bowl with watermelon,
Mom stops me.
"Not in that one, dear. It doesn't have a lid."

Honorable Mention Poetry, Sara Lamb

A Flight

We all grieve alone. Initially, we are surrounded by a caring circle of loving, compassionate friends who disappear after a few weeks. Oh, they still ask, but only if you are so down that you can't even begin to put on a happy face. What about the days when the memory just tugs at your heart, yet you can still paste on a smile? No one asks, but you remember.

You try to squish your memories out of the way, crowding your life with new and different people. Despite your efforts to construct a mask so real that it looks like a true structure, it doesn't work. The memories and loss always break through when someone else loses a loved one. But you can't tell them your story. It's their few weeks of being surrounded by compassionate friends. You don't want to clutter up their snatches of sympathy with your own loss – they deserve those few weeks.

Your grief is just as fresh as theirs although they lost that person just days ago and you have had years.

You try to say that it gets better as time passes. However, you know it doesn't. There is no successful coping method. I tell jokes to Heaven. It is the way that I grieve. I know that my best friend is up there laughing harder than anyone here on earth. She died almost two and a half years ago at 10:20 in the morning. Yes, I know the exact time. I even know the song she was listening to on the car radio just seconds before the wreck – "Light the Fire Again."

I know because I was there. I was driving the car.

People ask about the physical scars, expecting a quick explanation. Physical scars can be quickly explained in two simple words: car accident. That is all people expect – they have no desire to hear a painful description of a past crisis. The familiar question, how are you?, does not allow for an explanation. A simple good or bad is quite satisfactory.

What about the cuts and bruises that never heal, staying open, torn and bleeding? They don't want to hear about how every time a semi drives by, I remember. Or about how Cheri and I had made plans to be in each other's weddings. She's not go-

ing to be in my wedding – at least not in person. She will be some white rose in a beautiful vase sitting off to the side and a little blurb in the program to tell people what the flower stands for – but nothing more. Probably, no one will ask me about the white rose because it will be my wedding day, and I should be happy.

But there is something that people don't realize. I don't remember Cheri just because someone brings up her name – I've never forgotten her. She was a presence, filling the room. People would ask us if we were sisters. I could never have measured up to her – not close enough to be her sister. She was full of humor and love. You either loved Cheri or you hated her, but most people chose to love her.

People loved Cheri because she teased them but never enough so that it hurt. They loved her because she was fiercely loyal to those she called her friends and gave a lash of her tongue to those who hurt her friends. They loved her because she was generous, but not in a way that made one feel poor. They loved her because she often made mistakes and sometimes hurt people, but she knew to ask for forgiveness. I loved her because she loved me.

Cheri saw something in me that other people didn't see. She made me feel special from the first time I saw her – not special in the way that your parents make you feel, but special in the way that only another person who has no obligation to love you can make you feel. Cheri loved me because I was myself.

We met when we were both in third grade. She was playing on the swings with a crowd of little girls. I was all by myself playing in the dirt by the jungle gym. I wasn't a mean little girl; I was just quiet and I had glasses – two things that almost ruined one's chances of ever being loved by their third grade peers. And I was tall – even for a third grader. So I played by myself a lot. Cheri was tall with glasses too, but no one thought to laugh at her. Maybe it was because she wasn't quiet, or maybe it was just because she had a presence about her even in third grade that commanded respect. All I knew was that she was playing on the swings with people,

and I was playing in the dirt without people.

Then she did the unthinkable – she asked me if I wanted to play with them. I was so scared. I didn't know any of those girls. But Cheri gave me a swing ride – the kind where you twist the two swings up and then one person stays steady while the other flies around them quickly untwisting – a ride that is not necessarily fun for the person staying still in the middle, but was wonderful for the rider on the outside.

I was on the outside, and I felt as if I could fly. Cheri was in the middle, but she wasn't bored – she was like that. She loved being in the spotlight, but more than that, she loved seeing her friends soaring around and around.

I did a lot of soaring with Cheri. Most of the time she would soar with me, although sometimes she would let me go alone and just be there to push and be an anchor. I only remember one time when she soared ahead of me without reaching back for me. It was not that she didn't want me there too.

We were both sophomores in high school, trying out for the concert choir. I thought that I could sing, but Cheri really could sing. I just carried a pitch while she made the notes into a melody. I didn't make the choir sophomore year although Cheri did. She wanted to sing with her whole heart. I selfishly wanted her to stay in the mediocre choir with me but she wanted to fly. For once Cheri wanted to be the person soaring around on her swing while I was to be her anchor.

I wasn't as good an anchor as Cheri was. I couldn't just sit there and be happy for her; I wanted the impossible – I wanted to fly with her. But I learned a lot that year from Cheri. I learned how to sit humbly in the middle, holding on to the feet of someone so they could fly. How to put aside my own desire to be the one putting on the performance so I can help someone else star in their own show. Our junior year we both made concert choir. But the year that we were apart taught me the most. The end of our junior year, Cheri auditioned for the most prestigious musical group in the school – she wanted to be a Madrigal Singer. She prayed, trained her voice, and practiced for

her audition, finding out a few weeks later that she had made it. We made all these plans for when I would come and watch her perform.

But Cheri never sang with the Madrigals.

I don't know why I wanted to drive. Maybe it was because she always drove or because I had my parent's car. I don't think I'll ever know my reasoning. Somehow I was behind that steering wheel and somehow I didn't see that enormous white semi just mere feet from the passenger side of our car. Somehow I decided to ignore the yield sign, and somehow we sideswiped the truck. Somehow, she died and somehow I lived.

I don't know why I am here, and she is not, but I do know that Cheri never got the chance to sing in Madrigals. She never got to give another lonely girl on the playground a swing ride.

So why am I writing this in an essay? Is it to get a little extension on those original few weeks of sympathy? Or is it an attempt to soften the burden of guilt, pain, and regret hanging around my heart? Or is it to try to begin chipping away at the mask of a happy face that I have cultivated for the past two and a half years?

Sarah Naber

Ant

You are a small blur
that constantly sprints
in and out of the straight cracks,
and your body—three tiny balloons—
bounces about the concrete,

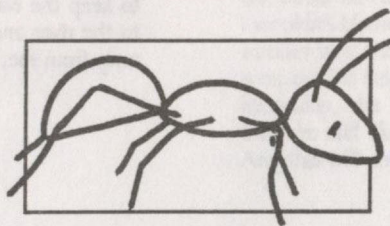
having no ears, you do
not attend to sound,
but if you could
hear, would you pause
to listen

or would your six wiry legs
continue to pedal
relentlessly as you dash
across the ground and I suddenly
realize that I am tired

of following you
around
in circles.

You are like the others
that I have attempted
to comprehend;
you do not slow down
or take your time
or rest for any reason.

Tom Truesdell



Doing Layout on the First Day's Outfit

First day of work
at a fashionable,
upper case place.
My byline reading is efficient,
capable of a fast-pace.

All depends on apparel,
securing first impressions.
Others witnessing you
with white space
equates painful lessons.

Desiring a meticulous lead,
I select my attire with care.
A power headline
but first a teaser
of extra time on hair.

Careful proofing and editing
to my mirror's disdain.
I experiment with a new layout.
This reflected image
reads poor from the rear.

Therefore, I begin anew,
keeping only the headline.
Tugged by time,
I glance at the clock.
Twenty minutes left 'til deadline.

Sarah Naber

The Heart Exchange

Hey lady, you wanna blanket?" The voice appeared out of nowhere. "Only seventy quetzals!"

"Whatever!" I shot back at the little Guatemalan boy. "I could easily buy that blanket anywhere else for fifteen quetzals." I knew that the words that I had spoken contained nothing but a falsehood. The work was too beautiful. Still, he persisted.

"Sixty-five quetzals," he returned, his brown eyes dancing.

"Twenty," my stubbornness wouldn't go that high.

"Sixty."

"Twenty-five."

"Fifty-five."

"Forty quetzals, my final offer!"

"Okay, it yours lady. You a tough barterer." He grinned. I smiled back. I liked him. I knew that during my two week stay in Antigua, I would be back to barter with this scrawny kid again.

I did go back, almost every day for the next two weeks. He always began with a high price. I began with a low. Of course we met in the middle—both feeling proud of ourselves. It was a game, and it was fun. We became friends—Marcus and I.

The last few days that I journeyed to the market, I bartered with Marcus on a brilliant wool coat. I knew that I would get it. He would only go down to a hundred, and I would only go as far up as seventy. I knew I would pay the one hundred even though I pretended that I wouldn't. He knew it too.

I went back to the market the second to the last day I was there, planning to get the coat. When I arrived at the spot where Marcus sold treasures, I noticed that he was packing all of it away in a wooden box.

"Father say it time to go home."

"You're leaving!?"

"Yes." He looked so sad. "You a cool one lady."

Outwardly, I smiled. "You're a pretty cool guy yourself." Inwardly, I panicked. I didn't want him to leave. I wanted to know after I left that he would still be here in this same spot. I wanted to know where he would be when I remembered him.

"We live up in the hills. Madre sick and need us to go home." He seemed to sense my sadness. "You wanna get the coat?"

I grinned. He knew that I did. "Seventy quetzals?"

"I tell you before lady, a hundred, a hundred!" He paused. "Alright, seventy okay."

I reached my hand into my jeans' pocket pulling out my the money. I recognized that his family must be having a hard time at home. I handed him all but twenty of the 250 quetzals I knew I had left.

Marcus looked at me incredibly. "This is more than seventy quetzals, Margo."

"I know."

Marcus reached over, giving me a hug. I turned slowly away, walking with heavy steps back to where I was staying.

The next day I trudged back to the market where Marcus and I had done so much bartering. I remembered with a smile the times that we had stubbornly spent trying to persuade the other to change the bid being offered for his goods. I remembered his dark brown hair, the beautiful brown eyes that sparkled. And there was something else I remembered. That hug he gave me, tears spilling down his cheeks.

Margo Hanson

Returning to a River

I lay against the steeped and brown-grassed bank of the river, my body open to the crisp, smoky sky. Crossed arms resting on my stomach like an old man watching television, I close my eyes and imagine the flowing water meander between the fields.

A stone like advice from a mother nudges my hip, telling me to wake and see the ripples struggle against the current.

My feet implant in mud as truthful as the distinct cold of a February night, and hunching over the river's edge, I watch the water

slip from my cupped hands, my civilized hands. Once more, I try to keep the water, but it returns to the river and flows away from me.

Tom Truesdell

Amelia

Exposing my thrill to
the photographers
covering the affair,
I beam at my tenacious triumph of
fleeing the confines of
convention.

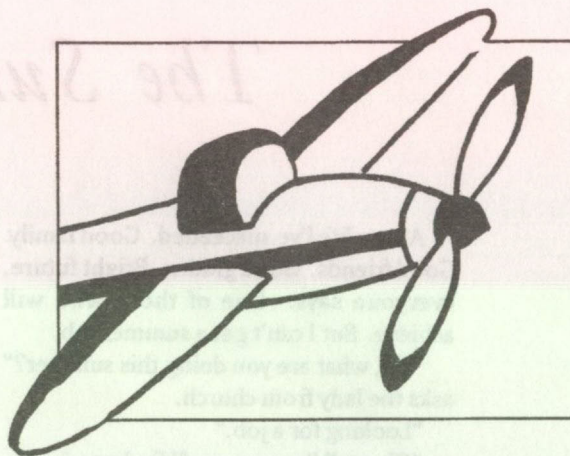
It was never a question of "Could I?"
It was one of "Do I dare
to show the world that a
single woman they call *flighty*
could navigate through air
as well as any man?"

I, a Kansas-born woman,
intent on reaching her lofty dream,
have encountered
turbulent dissension
placed on my course by spiteful mice,
intent on keeping me in their fields.

My place is in the clouds;
their dissent only speeds my flight
upward,
toward the beckoning sun,
bright as the smile I produce now,
knowing I am no coward.

I have broken
the barriers
of society, space, and sound.
Wearing a tailored jacket
and slacks, I am setting off to travel
all the way around
the world and back.

Amanda Baker



Sitting on a Football Field

It's freezing out here.
The game is over, the fans
have all gone home. Most are
tucked safely in bed, dreaming
of the next win.
The grass already has frost on
it, the tips glittering like diamonds
under the silver moon.
My breath comes out in little clouds, my
words hanging like crystal
chandeliers in the air.
And in this place where, earlier
this afternoon,
screaming spectators filled the air with
cheers for the home team, everything
else is silent; only
my Story breaks the stillness.

My friend is sitting next
to me on this cold bench.
I call her Mel, and I tell her
those Things deep in my soul,
and show her those Places in me
no one else has ever seen.
And she is just sitting with me.
Just caring, even though
she could be running away.
I wouldn't blame her. In fact, I
wonder why she's still here. And
now, on this field of our
friendship, she is telling me
that she still likes what she sees.
And this will always be a beautiful place.

Abby Stevens

The Heart Exchange

The Summer Job

All my life I've succeeded. Good family. Good friends. Good grades. Bright future, everyone says. One of those who will achieve. But I can't get a summer job.

"Oh, what are you doing this summer?" asks the lady from church.

"Looking for a job."

"Oh, well I'm sure you'll find one."

Job market's good. I'm willing to work hard, I'm friendly, smart.

I go in for an interview at a grocery store. "Oh, I'm sure you'll get the job," says the neighbor lady. The interview goes well. I'm confident, amiable. The manager seems pleased. "I'll have to talk to the other managers," he says, "We'll call by Wednesday."

The phone is silent.

I apply at the restaurant where my friend got a job. "They're desperate for workers," she says. "They just glanced at my application—just the front sheet where I said I was a US citizen and hadn't committed a felony—and asked if I could start on Monday." They examine my application page by page. I go in for two interviews. "You applying to be a waitress?" asks one of the waiters. "I'm sure you'll get it." "We'll call," the manager says.

I go in for an interview at the hardware store. The manager isn't there, his boy is sick. But I talk to the assistant manager. "I'll talk to the manager and he'll give you a call," he says.

This morning the phone rings. "It's a man," my mom says, "I don't recognize the

voice. I think it's about a job."

No. It's a call from a college about a French class I had signed up to take this summer. "There's not enough students. We've had to cancel the class." I understand. I thank him for calling. I hang up.

"You didn't get the job?" my mother says.

I remember before my parents would let me date. No, let me get that right. Dating wasn't prohibited, it was "strongly discouraged." Anyway, I remember when dating was "strongly discouraged." I got asked out a few times. I got flowers a couple of times. But more than that I heard rumors of quite a few people who were interested. So I thought that when I could date I would date.

Bright future. One of those who should have no problem finding a boyfriend. I come home from college for a visit, see a friend I haven't seen in a while. "So, do you have a boyfriend?" he asks.

"No." I haven't even gone on a date.

"So, are you interested in anyone?" another friend asks over lunch. She's convinced that's all it would take.

Job market's good. Everyone's hiring. All you've got to do is apply.

"We should get together for lunch sometime," one guy says. "We should get together sometime," says another. "We could plan something," says a third.

"That sounds great," I say.

"Okay, I'll give you a call."

Honorable Mention Prose, Colette Johnson